

**Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council  
Meeting Minutes  
July 26 & 27 2007  
Eureka Opera House  
Eureka, Nevada**

**July 27 - Tour**

**Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present and Category Represented:**

Larry Barngrover	(2) Wildlife
Tom Connolly	(1) Federal Grazing
Les Hansen	(2) Dispersed Recreation
Kirk Nicholes	(1) Energy/Minerals

**Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:**

Mike Brown	Public Affairs Officer, Elko Field Office
Ken Miller	Field Office Manager, Elko Field Office
John Ruhs	Field Office Manager, Ely Field Office
Doran Sanchez	Chief Communications, Nevada State Office
Jerry Smith	Field Office Manager, Battle Mountain FO

**Other Attendees**

Josh Hyde	public
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**1:00 p.m. Tour left the Eureka Opera House. Kirk Nicholes was the tour leader for the Ruby Hill Mine Tour.**

**Stop 1 – Ruby Hill Mine Conference Room**

- Bill Daubenschmidt gave a power point presentation on the Cyanide Code. That presentation is attached to these Meeting Minutes.

- Kirk Nicholes commented that cyanide spills occur at mines around the world. A new set of standards was developed. Implementing the cyanide program began in February 2007 at the Ruby Hill Mine. Cyanide liquid comes from Carlin. It is used to leach the gold out of the ore.

- General discussion of worker safety with cyanide. Cyanide is closely monitored for worker and public safety. There is zero cyanide distribution at the Ruby Hill facility.

- Jerry Smith asked about mercury and NDEP rules.

- Kirk Nicholes discussed Ruby Hill's mercury operations. Nicholes explained the application and permit process. The mercury program is new in Nevada. Nevada mines produce 1.5 metric tons per year which is very small. The mines' mercury emissions are very small. Nicholes also gave an overview of the Ruby Hill Mining District. It is a historic district and silver and zinc were mined here. Gold was discovered here in 1992. In 1997, the EIS was completed and the Ruby Hill Mine gold operations started up. It is open pit only. Ruby Hill was mined from 1997 to 2002. The price of gold dropped to \$252 per ounce. The original permit was to mine to the water table only – there was more gold deeper, but they stopped. There were 16 people at the mine at its lowest point. In 2003 the SEIS was prepared for mining below the water table. In September 2005, the Decision was signed allowing the additional mining.

- Jerry Smith said that BLM sold the public land to the mine, but BLM retained the mineral rights.

- Les Hansen asked how much dewatering is there.

- Kirk Nicholes replied there is 660 gallons per minute and 30 million gallons of water were pumped last month, 20 million of which was for dust suppression at the mine. Some water is discharged back into Diamond Valley – last month 6 million gallons. There is no heavy metal problem with the water.

- Jerry Smith said the mine works very closely with the City of Eureka and Eureka County. Ruby Hill is to be commended for this.

- Kirk Nicholes described there is a citizens committee that was formed during the NEPA process and there are quarterly Advisory Committee meetings. There have been some dust complaints. The pit will get within 2,000 feet of the Eureka School. Wind is a problem. For mitigation, they are dumping on the east to block the view from Eureka and it also blocks noise and sound. Blasts are timed for 4:30 p.m.

- Kirk Nicholes added that there are now 125 employees and 30 contractors. There is a housing shortage which is a problem. Barrick supplies some housing. There is a 25% employee turnover. Most employees are from Eureka, a handful from Ely, and others from Austin, Elko, and Utah. The life expectancy of the mine is another five years – not a long mine life.

## **Stop 2 – Ruby Hill Mine Pit Overlook**

- Kirk Nicholes discussed the 500-foot deep pit, the ore body and its characteristics, ground water, and dewatering operations. Nicholes also talked about overburden and waste. Barrick is recovering 88-90% of the gold at Ruby Hill which is very efficient. Some ore is trucked to Barrick to the roaster. There are two waste dumps for the overburden.

- Nicholes added that they reclaim as they go. The total permitted disturbance is 11,400 acres. There is potential for an underground mine and a feasibility study is being done now. The first mine was discovered at Ruby Hills in the 1860s during the Civil War.

## **Stop 3 – Eureka Overlook**

- Kirk Nicholes pointed out how close the disturbed area is to Eureka. It will come 2,000 feet at its closest to Eureka High School. Nicholes also discussed the mine rehab plan, planting on the slopes, and the benefits of concurrent mining and rehab.

## **Stop 4 – Mine Rehabilitation**

- Kirk Nicholes discussed the mine rehab at the dump site. They are using four-wing salt brush as the shrub component. They are also planting pinion and mountain mahogany. Nicholes also talked about the water infiltration ponds and their efficiency.

## **July 27 – Business Meeting**

### **Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present and Category Represented:**

Larry Barngrover	(2) Wildlife
Sheri Eklund-Brown	(3) Elected Official
Tom Connolly	(1) Federal Grazing
Vince Garcia	(3) Native American
Les Hansen	(2) Dispersed Recreation
Jon Hutchings	(3) Public-At-Large
Kevin Lee	(1) Transportation/ROW
Cyd McMullen	(2) Cultural Resources
Kirk Nicholes	(1) Energy/Minerals
Barry Perryman	(3) Academia
Dave Tattam	(2) Wild Horse and Burro
Hank Vogler	(1) Federal Grazing
Jeff White	(1) Energy/Minerals

### **Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:**

Mike Brown	Public Affairs Officer, Elko Field Office
Cody Coombs	Range Conservationist, Ely Field Office
Chris Hanefelt	Public Affairs Officer, Ely Field Office
Ken Miller	Field Office Manager, Elko Field Office
John Ruhs	Field Office Manager, Ely Field Office
Doran Sanchez	Chief Communications, Nevada State Office
Gene Seidlitz	Associate Field Office Manager, Battle Mountain FO
Gerald Smith	Field Manager, Battle Mountain Field Office
Susie Stokke	Wild Horse Program Lead, Nevada State Office
Stephanie Trujillo	Administrative Assistant, Ely Field Office

### **Other Attendees**

Ken Benson	Eureka County Commissioner
Ken Matson	Public
Linda Perryman	Public
Gary McCuin	Nevada Department of Agriculture

**8:15 a.m. RAC Chairman Vince Garcia welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Everyone introduced themselves.**

### **I. REVIEW & APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

- Sheri Eklund-Brown sent corrections to Mike Brown of the meeting in Ely, Nev.
- Kevin Lee asked that the Mining Update portion of the last minutes be corrected to reflect that Newmont is building the road, not NDOT.
- Jeff White asked if the Gold Quarry slide questions had all been answered.
- Jerry Smith said the questions have been answered.

**Sheri Eklund-Brown made a motion to approve the minutes with those corrections. Barry Perryman seconded the motion. All in favor.**

## **II. DISCUSSION OF PREVIOUS DAY'S TOUR**

- Kirk Nicholes discussed the previous day's Ruby Hill Mine Tour and the history of the mine. The tour included a visit to pit overlook and the process building.
- Les Hansen commented that it was a great tour and expressed his thanks.
- Jeff White said that it has been nine plus years for the Ruby Hill Mine operations to have no accidents, that is outstanding!
- Jon Hutchings added that the mine has been so prosperous because all involved have worked hard at keeping a relationship and a leadership line of communication open.

## **III. WILD HORSE AND BURRO PROGRAM UPDATE**

- Susie Stokke gave the Wild Horse & Burro Program presentation. The power point presentation is attached to these Meeting Minutes.
- BLM Nevada manages half of the nation's wild horse and burros. Appropriate Management Level (AML) has been set on 100 of 102 Herd Management Areas (HMAs) in Nevada. We have achieved AML on a statewide basis. For 85 of the 102 HMAs we are at or below AML (set as a population range). Nevada is experiencing extreme drought and fire emergencies. In the Jackson Mountains there are three times as many animals as figured, there was no post census gather in 2003 and the estimations were low. The Field Office did not do a post-gather census until late June.
- Last Friday the military called to inform BLM of dead wild horses on their allotment. It is currently being investigated. There were 71 dead as of this morning and BLM has taken tissue samples. The location is in the general area of a bowl reservoir.
- Dave Tattam asked if the water source is being fenced off.
- Susie Stokke stated that alternative water is being brought in and the reservoir is fenced off. Four animals were tested. BLM did do water samples and some of the tests results should be received this afternoon. A recommendation was made to quarantine the horses. BLM does not want to quarantine if it is an infectious disease or virus as it could be spread to the other horses. There are 1,100 animals on Nellis AFB, and we're not seeing signs of it affecting wildlife. We are waiting for the information/results to take the next step.
- Barry Perryman asked if vets are monitoring the live horses.
- Susie Stokke answered that the problem is that signs are not prevalent when first viewing the animals.
- Hank asked what the policy is for this situation.

- Susie Stokke replied we do not want to speculate. This area is scheduled for gather in December, may need to speed it up. The pond is low because of the drought; usually it is eight feet right now it is down to two to three feet. The military is cooperative and BLM is monitoring the situation and will go from there.
- Dave Tattam asked if Nellis is doing water for calques.
- Susie Stokke said yes they have the supplies and are working on it.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown stated that it is unusual that they (horses) would go down so fast.
- Susie Stokke stated that they are not speculating, it is acute and not chronic.
- Les Hansen stated that wildlife uses this same water source.
- Dave Tattam commented that the digestion is different for wildlife.
- Jon Hutchings stated that issues are affecting gathers' scheduling - we are facing some emergency and management problems. It seems like what we are terming "emergency" are no longer expected emergencies. Is BLM taking stock of the long-term drought and that what is set as AML may not be appropriate as when it was set?
- Susie Stokke responded, yes that is the flexibility that she was talking about - we would like to be at mid-level. The herds are starting to be consistent and if we can hold on to funding we will be re-evaluating AML across the state.
- Jon Hutching said that the real concern we have collectively is having ongoing fires, as long as those conditions apply, and if we do not have management that reflects those emergencies the country that will suffer.
- Susie added that we do not have as many horses; we are able to adjust around.
- Gary McCuin commented that there is the ability to go through the summer gathers but come September the pipeline is plugged.
- Susie Stokke stated that that is not correct; we have increased capacity in Carson and Fallon. Callahan asked to move back so that another gather could be done sooner, only by a few months, it is not that bad.
- Jon Hutchings added that there are a host of reasons why we have these problems, some are the congressionals. We need to come to terms with what needs to be done nationally - if we are not having that conversation then we will have a larger problem.
- Larry Barngrover stated that BLM is 1,100 horses over AML.
- Susie Stokke responded that that on a bureau-wide basis, Nevada is at AML. We need to maintain an age and sex disposition. At Nellis AFB, a lot of the horses were in the old age class. We try to leave the old where they are. Need to get to AML first then focus on the sex structures.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked what ratio is left.

- Susie Stokke said we leave cross section ratio by individual herd and specify the age structure that we want to maintain.
- Ken Miller asked about adoption.
- Susie Stokke stated that 70,000 horses over the last ten years (70% of what was gathered) have been adopted in the 0-5 age class.
- Jeff White asked about the availability artifact or what adoptees are demanding.
- Susie Stokke answered they are requesting younger horses.
- Gary McCuin asked what has happened to the adoption numbers.
- Susie Stokke responded that long term holding capacity is at 20,000 and with the new facilities it will be 22,000.
- Dave Tattam commented that if pregnant the foal does not come back to adoption.
- Susie Stokke added there are 9 holding facilities.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked how monitored are they, those that are adopted out?
- Susie Stokke said they are monitored closely.
- Dave Tattam commented that slaughtered regulation changes have not affected the numbers.
- Hank Vogler said that 100,000 would need to be slaughtered a year.
- Susie Stokke remarked that the adoption market historically was usually 7,000-8,000 horses per year. The market now is 5,000-6,000 a year. The target this year is 3,500, it was 5,500.
- Gary McCuin commented that the trend is decreasing.
- Susie Stokke discussed fertility control. BLM has been working on it since 1978 using PZP under an investigational exemption. PZP has 90% effectiveness, but cannot be administered yearly. BLM needs a longer term option. The two-year option gives 70-90-% control, and needs to be administered in the November-February timeframe. There is work being done on a three to four year vaccine - no formula is done yet.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked do you do gelding.
- Susie Stokke responded we are looking at managing horses as non-breeding and that is not acceptable for all, there are some issues.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked why the females are the only ones that get darted.
- Susie Stokke said we are looking at various other options.
- Dave Tattam commented that if it is only 90% effective that is still 400-500 horses that you will not have to manage.

- Susie Stokke said the bulk of research is being done in Nevada.
- Vince Garcia asked why can't you manage the stallions in holding facilities?
- Susie Stokke stated that all it takes is one stud.
- Hank Vogler added that the animals hide in heavy PJ areas. Those animals caught on and got smart to the helicopter fast.
- Susie Stokke added that this is not like a ranch operation.
- Vince Garcia said that they are going to compete with wildlife and livestock, and this needs to be managed. It is cheaper for horse to graze than stand in a holding facility.
- Barry Perryman commented that there are groups, are they alleviating with the coalitions that are being developed.
- Susie Stokke stated that the horse program is controversial. There are hugely diverse ideas from these groups.
- Dave Tattam added that there is a wide range of groups; some do not understand the process.
- Barry Perryman said that the new challenge is how to stay at AML. Need coalition effort with horse advocacies to fund their own.
- Jerry Smith asked what is being done to have PZP approved.
- Susie responded that they are working with us for the vaccine but we are years away. The foundation "the Mustang Heritage Foundation" has been formed. The Foundation will be holding the Extreme Mustang Makeovers. The horses are out of Fallon. The horses are placed with trainers in 29 states. They have saved a half million dollars. Next year they're looking at the top trainer in west and top in east. The training paid for those placed in homes; we have 15 placed already.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked a 100 horses costs a half million?
- Susie Stokke said that we are looking at long term and other effects that is a savings of one half million. Adoption incentives form futurity for horses; set-up shows have added prize money.
- Dave Tattam stated that BLM needs to make sure that they have to be bred in the wild.
- Susie Stokke discussed the virtual adoption program; take a Nevada mustang to school program. The class can adopt and will receive learning materials, trading cards that tell stories and the focus is on Nevada mustangs.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if this concept is expanded to adults.
- Susie Stokke commented that we have completed a pilot program with the girl scouts.
- Gary McCuin asked what you have to do.
- Susie Stokke responded that there are some requirements, internet searches.

- Gary McCuin added that this is the education component.
- Susie Stokke said that the girl scouts were given a tour of the facility. August 3<sup>rd</sup> is Mustang Day in Reno. At Palomino Valley adoptions have doubled since the implementation of the volunteer program.
- Dave Tattam asked what the cost per head for adoption is.
- Susie Stokke responded that it is under \$1,000 each; the advertising is \$300 each.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown commented that this should be commercialized more. Maybe a possible train going thru to view.
- Susie Stokke said that that would take a lot of money and organization.
- Jon Hutchings discussed a group who went to Carson City to lobby having the mustang as the second state animal. The proposal was initiated by a teacher, part of the project was lobbying. It was a political move.
- Susie Stokke stated that the House budget proposed \$4.7 million with \$5.7 million additional above.
- Jon Hutchings commented that where the federal program is going is two parallel mandates – one is manage range resources and two is manage horses. Is there an understanding of the issues?
- Susie Stokke said yes. Emergencies are a lot less then before.
- Jon Hutchings added that he would like to see the issue of AML; there are HMAs that are over AML.
- Susie Stokke commented that there are 17 of them. Jackson Mountains is 800% of AML. We will see a regular gather schedule if the funding remains.
- Barry Perryman added that there are some changes in riparian habitats and he hopes monitoring infrastructure is in place.
- Susie Stokke added that Nellis AFB is one of the good range recovery areas that can be seen.
- John Hutchings added that one of the benefits is once the cost of gathers goes down, other tools can be used.
- Gary McCuin commented that the proposal is to minimize the number in long term holding, be proactive and do planning. We would like to work with you, there are specific things that we can do to help.
- Susie Stokke discussed gather numbers – 1,265 planned for this summer and next summer 2,600 and those can easily be accommodated with the additional holding facilities. BLM is looking for more holding facilities nationally. What we are looking at is funding, we are \$2 million short to run the program. We need \$40 million to run the program. We're looking at cost cuts and increased adoptions. If every livestock permittee took just one horse, we would be in good shape.



- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked about transplanting.
- Susie Stokke stated that the law is specific; we are required to manage horses on land where they were found in 1971.
- Hank Vogler asked what percent of the money (\$40 million) is for Nevada?
- Susie Stokke responded that she has the money she needs. A lot of our horses go to facilities out of Nevada and are paid by other states.
- Dave Tattam asked what percent of horses are lost.
- Susie Stokke responded, very low - in long term hold it's under 10%.
- Vince Garcia asked about the percent lost on the range.
- Susie commented that we have 85 HMAs at AML. The percent is not high.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown commented that it would be interesting to see the budget and where Nevada falls.
- Susie stated that the budget is \$40 million, half in holding for adoptions.
- Gary McCuin commented that we need to go to our senators and request money, need deliverables. If we get the money imagine what efforts will be done.
- Susie Stokke responded that the range improvements' money is not there.
- Jon Hutchings discussed the impacts to the BLM in terms of unwanted horses. Hutchings proposed that a letter be done to the Wild Horse and Burro program lead to address this.
- Susie Stokke added that we do not slaughter. There is a coalition that can be contacted if you are interested.
- **Jon Hutchings motioned that a letter be prepared to the State Director to encourage analysis of the horse legislation on the range.**

#### **10:00 am - Public comment period opened.**

- Ken Benson said the numbers on the census do not add up. There are twice as many in holding than on the range. Could do management and habitat shifts, give mustangs to NDOW - the idea is seen as a joke but there is a lot of truth in this. When ranchers negotiate with SNWA, the ranchers take the grazing and it should go to SNWA - they could have the Nellis horses.

#### **10:30 am Break**

#### **10:45 am Resume**

- Jon Hutchings reminded the group that a motion is still on table to write a letter to the State Director.

- Jeff White expressed his appreciation, as a representative of Newmont, to the agencies for fire suppression activities at the Mule Canyon Mine. White wanted to note a thank you to Jerry Smith and the concerted effort of BLM, NDF and the county.
- Jon Hutchings added to the guys at Cortez also.
- Gary McCuin commented that this is not a natural situation; pre-suppression efforts needed rather than suppression. Funding for fire suppression keeps going down, need active vegetation management.
- Vince Garcia added we should be green stripping boundaries where these fires are occurring. Put in a green strip to control. Running out of natural habitat to burn we are looking at rehabilitation and re-burns.
- Jon Hutchings added that the governor appointed a committee working group to look at these suppression areas.
- Gary McCuin said there is a need to recognize that pre-suppression is good idea; the governor appointed the position but there is not support from agencies for this position.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown commented that she does not see that resistance at the state level. Senator Reid has bill coming out - all agencies are working at pulling all our resources for this. Look at rancher and economy effects.
- Barry Perryman commented that this is a nationwide problem. The problem is west-wide. Congress is going to have to provide the funding and make it easier to do what is needed.
- Hank Vogler added that the lightning started fires in White Pine area are being managed using wildfire use, there needs to be a balance.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown added that the topic would be good for the Tri-RAC agenda, bring Ed Monnig and Ron Wenker in.
- Barry Perryman suggested bringing some of the staffers in from Ensign's, Reid's, and Heller's office; looking at what is happening in Washington and what the probabilities are.
- Gary McCuin added that this would be good for them to hear about the gridlock, we need vegetation management.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown commented that Western Watershed is fighting rehab and permit renewals; this makes it difficult for the agencies.
- Barry Perryman commented that they lost the last case, it is a chronic problem.

#### **Agenda Items for Tri-RAC: Wildfire pre-suppression, Funding, Litigation Frivolous Lawsuits, and NEPA.**

- Larry Barngrover said we need to be looking into the future to protect ourselves so that we have something left. If not it will be repeated.

- Ken Benson said well managed livestock grazing is a cost effective method.
- Tom Connolly seconded the comment – It needs to be pushed out there.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown responded that it is being pushed.
- Vince Garcia added that when a fire goes through, not all the users are hurt by it, just the ranchers. Hunters are still able to hunt.
- Larry Barngrover said that the wildlife supporter also is affected by these fires. Sportsmen need optimum habitat to be effective. There needs to be management of habitat to have more productive habitat cycles. Some disturbance has to occur periodically, most sportsmen will deny this.
- Vince Garcia said hunters do not care what the land looks like, there is a different kind of public out there, and they only care about their recreation opportunities.
- Kevin Lee added that some of the worst crashes are after the incident. Need to coordinate road closures with NDOT. Guys in the field need to understand what the results can be, there can be catastrophic results.
- **Jon reminded group of motion for letter to make information available to the public. Dave seconded. *Motion passed by all.* Mike Brown stated that the letter needs to come from the RAC. Brown assisted last time writing the letter and it was a nightmare trying to capture all the members' ideas. Decision was made for Jon Hutchings and Gary McCuin to write the letter.**

#### **IV. ELY FUELS TREATMENT PROGRAM**

##### **Ely Fuels Treatments- Cody Coombs (handout)**

**Bureau of Land Management  
Ely Field Office  
Hazardous Fuels Program  
Project Planning and Implementation Process**

##### **Planning/Budgeting**

- Three-year program of work is developed and sent to the State and National BLM Offices for budgeting and out-year planning purposes. Projects are developed based on input from resource staff and other partners.
- Projects for the next fiscal year are submitted annually to the State Office by April 1<sup>st</sup>. Each project is ranked based on National BLM priorities and sent to the State Office.
- Field Office prioritizes each project based on coordination with partners, local resource needs, and watershed objectives.
- State Office prioritizes projects for the entire state (from all Field Office submissions) and determines which projects to fund based on ranking criteria.

Criteria that boosts project priority:

- Community Hazard Assessment has been completed and project was identified in the plan.
- Condition Class is 2 or 3 and Fire Regime is I, II, or III (National priority is to treat areas in Condition Class 2 or 3 and Fire Regime Groups I, II and III)
- Project occurs in identified sage-grouse or T&E habitat
- Large scale project (1,100+ acres of prescribed fire, and 500+ acres of mechanical)
- Risk rating is high
- Multiple land ownership and partners
- Joint internal and external funding sources
- Mechanical treatment (WUI areas)
- Stewardship contracting is anticipated
- Utilization of biomass
- Specific project objectives are normally developed through watershed assessment data collection, through site specific assessment or from other partners (e.g., NDOW, permittee, ENLC, universities)
- Internal and public scoping to develop proposed and any alternative actions to meet project objectives
  - Public scoping involves mailing letters to interested public, internet postings and local news releases. Tours of the project area are sometimes scheduled depending on amount of public involvement and comments.
- Complete appropriate NEPA document (Categorical Exclusion or Environmental Assessment)
- Send preliminary NEPA document to public and state clearinghouse for review and comment
- Develop final NEPA document and decision, and send to public who have expressed interest

### **Implementation**

- Work with internal staff and partners to refine actual treatment area and design to meet project objectives within the limitations of the NEPA document
- Determine appropriate vehicle (i.e., contract, internal, etc.) to complete work. Utilize partners and in-kind matching labor to gain other avenues (grants) of funding
- Utilize stewardship contracting if possible to utilize product, offset service cost, and provide benefit to local community
- Monitor project and provide results/discussion with partners on actions that can be used to develop future successful projects

### **Key Items to Successful Projects**

- Develop good project objectives and proposed action
- Close coordination with partners and public (allow sufficient participation)
- Spread information on projects and keep partners and public informed of any changes
- Do what you say you are going to do
- Listen and keep apprised of what is going on within the area, and try to partner with those who are completing similar work

**Contact:**

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Fuels Program Manager  
BLM--Ely Field Office  
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- Cody Coombs added that the challenge the Ely office has is finding a market for the biomass, transportation costs are a large factor. One contractor is using the biomass as firewood. This fall the office will be completing the North Spring Valley project and a thinning project near Robinson Summit, west of Ely. The partners include NDOW, ENLC, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and UNR.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if most work is done under a Categorical Exclusion (CX).
- Cody Coombs responded that the Ely office has done a mix - within the last couple of years most of the projects have been done under an Environmental Assessment (EA).
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if the field office will do EAs for larger areas.
- Cody Coombs responded, yes, CXs are limited in the size of the area.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if the office could complete an EA in a year.
- Cody Coombs said that it would be difficult, especially if litigated. Would like to plan one year and implement the next year.
- Jon Hutchings asked what the acreage for the treatments in Ely was.
- Cody Coombs responded that the acreage is 12-13 thousand acres per year.
- Jon Hutchings asked other managers if they were doing the same acreage.
- Jerry Smith responded that Battle Mountain is under the 12-13 thousand acres.
- Ken Miller said that some years the Elko office is under and that some years it is above.
- Jon Hutchings asked if there is more activity for these projects,
- Jerry Smith said yes, each year Battle Mountain is working on projects that are 3-4 thousand acres.
- Hank Vogler asked if this funding would be taken out of the wildfire funding.

- Cody Coombs responded that these are handled separately.
- John Ruhs added that it would not affect the fuels funding that the office may have received.
- Cody Coombs noted that in an emergency situation the NEPA process can be pushed through (for wildfires) usually within a month or less.
- Gary McCuin added that 450,000 thousand acres a year needs to be treated.
- Cody Coombs added that the current fuels budget will not allow that number of acres to be treated in a year.
- Barry Perryman commented that 2 million acres of pinion-juniper a year needs to be treated to maintain status quo. Perryman asked regarding the second bullet - condition has class already crossed threshold.
- Cody Coombs responded 1 has potential condition, 2 is past potential condition, 3 pinion-juniper encroachment very little understudy. 2&3 are the highest priority.
- Barry Perryman added that you should be focusing on 1 and some 2; you get more bang for buck. When you get to 3 it is already too late. When do you intervene all slanted on the back end of the project.
- Jon Hutchings added look at some of those areas that are rated 1 & 2 and then view Crescent Valley compare the difference.
- Vince Garcia responded that this is a typical management problem; it is not used when it should be.
- Barry Perryman said that for the seed used for fire rehab - the federal procurement process does not allow for stockpiling, so it is purchased when it is more expensive.
- Hank Vogler asked if Ely received SNPLMA money for some of the projects.
- Cody Coombs answered that the office did get money in Lincoln County to do sage brush restoration and a resource and cultural inventory around Pioche.
- Jerry Smith noted that the budget for fuels is shrinking.
- Cody Coombs stated that the suppression costs are so high that fuels funding is being used to pay for the suppression that was done last year (in some offices). The Ely office is working with NDOW and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and is keeping the public in the loop so that we can do projects on the ground.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown stated that the collaborative process that the Ely office has with ENLC is where some of the success is, they are involved in environmental groups more than other offices.
- Chris Hanefelt added that we invited Katie Fite to be part of the process of the project.
- Hank Vogler reminded the group that White Pine County is 97 % federal land.

- Larry Barngrover questioned the range update that was given at the Ely meeting - the monitoring effort of grazing program. The program is appropriate but there is no resource loss due to pinion-juniper encroachment; use monitoring reports to build the case of vegetation monitoring.
- John Ruhs added that watershed assessments are looked at and used as a tool of identifying, and are used as a causal factor. Rangeland health assessment causal factors are not analyzed, like drought is not uncovered in the document. There may be other factors identified, need to recognize that other factors may influence condition.
- John Hutchings stated that rangeland and watershed are what you are looking at. Looking at uses of vegetation component and identify. Pinion-juniper comes back to fuels, the data is used to look at what treatment is appropriate.
- Jerry Smith said offices have to compete with each other for funding. 70,000 acres is our largest project which came out of a rangeland health assessment.
- Cody Coombs said there are strings attached to the funding; most of the budget is in wildland urban interface. Non-urban interface funding is still tied to conditions 2 and 3, competing is statewide and also nationally. The fuels program is the highest funded program but we have to work with the strings. We look for complementary information to put together to contribute to the same objective.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown stated that numbers are going down and AUMs are going down. There is less grazing (sheep and other) and that is why we have these catastrophic fires. Stubble heights are a concern. The Idaho fire came to the Nevada line, when she flew over it she only saw two fire fighters and one retardant line. The communication is not there. Areas that BLM manages need to make sense, should try to be by local government jurisdictional boundaries.

**Lunch 11:55**

**Resume 1:15**

## **V. FIELD MANAGERS' REPORTS – OHV AND RANGE UPDATE**

### **Battle Mountain OHV Trails Update**

- Jerry Smith stated that there is nothing new. We went out with EA for the Shoshone trail system, held a public meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and did a lot of public scoping. We're not hearing negative comments. The scoping period closes August 10<sup>th</sup>. The Elephant Fire burned a portion of the proposed trail. We're inventorying roads and unauthorized roads in Wilderness Study Area (WSA) are being reclaimed.

### **Battle Mountain Range Update**

- Jerry Smith said they're making good progress on permit renewals. Battle Mountain has six that are being worked on and Tonopah has two.
- Barry Perryman asked about the grazing regulation status.
- Jerry Smith responded that the judge ruled in favor of Western Watershed. We are currently operating under 1995 regulations; there was no major impact.
- Barry Perryman asked what has to be cleaned up.

- Jerry Smith responded limiting amount of public comment and turning over range improvements.
- Barry Perryman questioned if a timetable has been set?
- Jerry Smith answered that the judge said to redo the EA and to incorporate the Fish & Wildlife Service comments. The Washington Office is meeting with Western Watersheds for a stipulated agreement.
- Gary McCuin asked if there is a chance for appeal.
- Jerry Smith stated that they are not looking at appealing at this time; it depends on how far they can go with the stipulated agreement. It has not been a large impact for day-to-day operations.
- Ken Miller asked does it affect the CX usage.
- Jerry Smith responded that it is departmental. 800,000 comments were received, and they're re-evaluating the process.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown questioned if the coordination meeting with Western Watersheds was only them?
- Jerry Smith stated that Resource Concepts and permittees were all invited; the meeting was open to all. It appears that there will not be any appeals, good feed back was received.
- Jon Hutchings stated that Eureka County has a concern with the one-on-one consultation process. It's important to have someone keeping an eye on things; it removes incentive to negotiate further then needed.
- Barry Perryman stated that Michelle McDaniel did a fabulous job.
- Jerry Smith added that BLM and permittees worked on different actions, those actions can be implemented on the ground. Having the permittees and Western Watershed both in attendance gave an opportunity for them to be able to work things out.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown questioned the applicants for the Woodland allotment, how are they prioritized?
- Jerry Smith stated that the priority is set.
- Jon Hutching asked if the process is for people to submit their full applications.
- Jerry Smith responded yes, determine who is the best qualified for the permit.
- Hank Vogler discussed water based allotments.
- Barry Perryman asked how many allotments are water based.
- Hank Vogler responded that White Pine is.
- Jerry Smith said that one fourth to one third of Nevada is.



### **Ely OHV Trails Update**

- John Ruhs said there are two major Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) plans for the Ely Office. The White Pine County land bill provided language for a feasibility study to be done for the Silver State trail system and there is SNPLMA planning money to help. The Lost Ox trail will be forming a team of specialists recommended by the county to revisit the trail and need.

### **Ely Range Update**

- John Ruhs said that the Ely Office has done 21 EAs for permit renewals; they are out for public comment. The office is working on putting together final EAs for these permit renewals.

- Barry Perryman questioned how many renewals are left?

- John Ruhs stated that the 21 renewals are one third of what needs to be completed.

- Larry Barngrover asked if renewals will be completed by the due date.

- John Ruhs stated yes, unless something unforeseen comes up. Ruhs added that Chris Mayer developed the process that the office is using.

- Question asked when the deadline to have the renewals completed is. The answer is that they need to be completed by FY 09.

- Vince Garcia stated that the concern from the RAC at the last meeting, the RAC was looking at sending out a letter ahead of time stating that there is a possibility that these would not be reached due to fires and drought. All managers said that they have told the State Director that they will be completed; it is unknown what will be done if they are not.

- Jerry Smith added that it would be a good Tri-RAC topic to give an updated report on the status of the renewals by office.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked how you accommodate huge fire losses into the RMP.

- Jerry Smith said this is not a large issue at this time. This year Battle Mountain had six big fires, the office intends to rehab, and they are not an issue.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown stated that this would be an opportunity to incorporate strategies with the permittee.

- John Ruhs added that the RMP identifies strategies and how deep the tool box is going to be.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown discussed Western Watersheds regarding the Carrico Lake Allotment. The assessment is to look at the objectives and tie into the rehab to get a jumpstart on the rangeland health.

- Larry Barngrover asked if comments are on this year's fire.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown responded, yes.

- Jerry Smith commented that they (Western Watersheds) want to see the whole thing closed off.

### **Elko OHV Trails Update**

- Ken Miller stated that Elko has one recreation planner. Recently there was a volunteer effort held on Spruce Mountain cleaning six miles of impassable trail. The Elko Office is behind the curve on OHV, will be spending time on signage.

- Les Hansen said that Tamara Hawthorne had a map of the trails that made it easy to follow; with signs it would make it even easier.

### **Elko Range Update**

- Ken Miller said permit renewals on track to meet the plan and Elko Field Office will not likely meet the deadline. Personnel have been focused on fires. We will do a reassessment before Tri-RAC meeting. We have completed 12 renewals and will complete four more. The actual target is more than 16, these will be picked up in FY 08, and it will take some real focus.

- Gary McCuin discussed the mandate, is this a Washington policy that set the deadline, is it a congressional mandate?

- Jerry Smith added that Congress expects us to finish. This was self-imposed by BLM Washington. They went to Congress and said that it would be completed by 2009. The Forest Service attached a rider to the appropriation bill to give extension, so it is both.

- Larry Barngrover commented that the RAC was formed to do some of the Standards and Guidelines; we need to make sure that this deadline is met.

- Jon Hutchings added that any assistance that the BLM can ask for from the RAC needs to be done. We need to make sure that we communicate.

- Vince Garcia added that the offices would have to pull people off of the fires and from the fire rehab to complete these. This is the purpose of the letter being sent to the State Director.

- Larry Barngrover commented that we (the RAC) are not in the position to say what resources are available; we need to ask that resources be looked at.

- Gary McCuin added that each permit should be looked at to determine if standards are being met. If no changes are in effect then those should be real simple. They should be prioritized in that matter.

- Ken Miller added that that is the plan. Elko will know more by the Tri-RAC.

- Hank Vogler commented that he is involved in a project in Elko County and the area is closed because of fire. To make it economically feasible is there any flexibility of the two-year off rule.

- Ken Miller responded that we (Elko-BLM) have been told to use every flexibility that we can to assist the current permittees.

- Gary McCuin asked what about a prescription?

- Ken Miller said we will work with permittees any way we can. Miller suggested that Vogler make a proposal to the permittee and we will work together.

- Barry discussed the new grazing regulations from Washington BLM and asked are they going to take out 8100?
- Jerry Smith responded that it is in the President's budget for last two years, Congress is putting money back in.
- John Ruhs reminded the group that it is the President's budget not the BLM's.

## **VI. MINING UPDATE**

The Mining Update was given by Jeff White. There is continued exploration throughout the state. Expansions are ongoing at several mines. The impact of fire and staffing is rippling into the industry. A legislation hearing WAS held yesterday in Washington. A field hearing will be held on August 21<sup>st</sup> in Elko and Dean Heller will be conducting the hearing.

White has received concerned feedback from staff and others concerning the transition to the 3 tier. When is it scheduled to happen? How is BLM managing the loss of AFM Nonrenewable Resources?

- Jerry Smith added that he had been approached by Cortez Mining officials who had the same concerns; we are combining Nonrenewable resources and Renewable resources into a field office with one Field Manager. There will be one position instead of two with signing authority. We're looking at mid-August sending proposal to Washington. Transition will be after approval and boundary changes.
- John Ruhs said that in Ely will have 3 field offices, it will make it easier to manage 4 million acres rather than what the field office manages currently.
- Hank Vogler stated that Barrick and Newmont are all that is left of the large mining operations.
- Jeff White said that there is fewer than 200,000 acres of disturbance state wide.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown questioned realty actions and number of personnel back log, is there ability to share resources between offices?
- Mike Brown said that new personnel for the Elko Office have started work.
- Ken Miller stated that the Elko office is looking at adequacy - will need some catch-up and training. The Elko office has two large rights-of way that they will be working on. Miller thanked Gene Seidlitz and the role that he played stepping in for the vacancy in Elko.

## **VII. DISCUSSION OF DOCUMENTS SENT IN ADVANCE**

- Kevin Lee shared possible funding for California trails to Dave Jamiel. There is \$1 million set aside in the Transportation bill that could possibly be used for this project.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown questioned the SNPLMA Round 8; the Indian Creek ranch proposal got support from the Northeastern Great Basin RAC. The RAC never supported this. Brown asked if watershed analysis is incorporated into future threats, can BARCASS data be incorporated?
- John Ruhs responded that we use any information available when doing analysis.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown questioned is Battle Mountain will continue central Nevada conservation plan.
- Jerry Smith stated we are a major player in the plan.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked, doesn't the state manage wildlife?
- Jerry Smith responded yes, but BLM manages the habitat.
- Gary McCuin stated that the plan is three years old, and asked why questioned?
- Vince Garcia said that this is the last meeting for Hank Vogler and Jon Hutchings, and a welcome was given to Ken. There will be three new members at Tri-RAC, held in Carson City, November 14-16.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if mining sustainability is written into the RMPs.
- Jerry Smith stated that Winnemucca had three issues. Need to look at full level sustainable.
- Jeff White stated that it is the state policy to have only two open at a time (RMPs),
- Jerry Smith commented that it is not written but it was voiced; cost is a large factor. Nevada will be the OPEC of renewable energy.

**Jeff White moved the meeting adjourned and the motion was seconded by Barry Perryman. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.**

Date Approved:

Approved by:

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Minutes by Stephanie Trujillo and Mike Brown